

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 000352

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN  
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/31/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ETRD](#) [PM](#) [POL](#) [CHIEF](#)

SUBJECT: PANAMA FOREIGN MINISTER'S VIEWS ON THE CANDIDACY  
OF FRANCISCO FLORES FOR OAS SECRETARY GENERAL

REF: STATE 25152

Classified By: AMBASSADOR LINDA WATT FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) Ambassador met with Foreign Minister Samuel Lewis on February 14 to discuss the OAS Secretary General race, per reftel instructions. Bringing Spanish and English versions of WHA PA's suggested op-ed article, she explained to Lewis that she preferred to deliver the text directly to him rather than to try to communicate with him on the issue via newspapers. The Ambassador delineated Flores's strengths and qualifications: Flores is a post-conflict, pragmatic, business-friendly reformer. He is an experienced politician and a leader of international stature, who is committed to poverty alleviation with a social agenda. All those qualities, the Ambassador said, were very much in tune with President Torrijos's vision both domestically and internationally. In addition, an OAS Secretary General from a small, Central American country could be beneficial to Panama's interests. Ambassador urged Lewis to support Flores, adding that she would inform Washington of Panama's position. (Comment: It is just possible, without sounding too optimistic, that the shared wish to put the OAS issue behind us could nudge the Panamanians toward a decision to support Flores. End Comment.)

12. (C) Lewis took those points on board and promised to discuss them with President Torrijos. He reiterated in all frankness that the GOP had considered that the Flores candidacy is not viable. Panama has been awaiting the emergence of a candidate who could attract wider Hemispheric support. (Note: As Embassy has consistently reported.) Lewis and Torrijos were non-committal when they met on February 11 with Chilean candidate Jose Miguel Insulza in Panama. As an aside, Lewis mentioned that Chile had promised to support Panama's aspirations to host the FTAA secretariat, only to toss them aside recently in favor of Trinidad, reportedly in exchange for Trinidad's support for Insulza. Lewis said that he believed the upcoming CARICOM meeting would be important in showing momentum towards a consensus.

13. (SBU) Also per reftel, Ambassador plans on February 16 to speak with the Salvadoran Ambassador, when she will return from travel, to arrange a joint meeting of CentAm ambassadors with Foreign Minister Lewis. The new Dominican ambassador has signaled his willingness to join such a meeting.

WATT